



Insider Secrets to Exhibitor Success



Virtual Event Playbook:
Insider Secrets from
Cloud Conventions



Overview

You had to transition your exhibit to a virtual environment in 2020 and now with 2021 on the horizon, virtual events will likely be your primary tradeshow and conference strategy. This calls on you to reimagine your trade show booth, find ways to attract people to you, and create calls to action that result in a sales lead. You want to be personal, stand out from the crowd, and motivate attendees to engage. After watching hundreds of exhibitors across many trade shows and conferences, we've got the "insider secrets" to exhibit strategies that deliver the ROI you need for success in the virtual world.



Plan, Prepare, Execute, Follow Up

Companies often believe that exhibiting at a virtual event takes way less work than a live one; however, nothing could be further from the truth. You don't have to ship the booth, travel to the venue and stand up all day, but you do have to create a plan, prepare ahead of time, elevate your graphics design, and understand how technology can work for you or against you. And remember, virtual events offer extended time to keep you connected to attendees even when the exhibit hall closes, and the live portion is over.

Achieve the Right ROI

Exhibitors that invest their virtual tradeshow budget in the right places have an outstanding opportunity to achieve an even-stronger ROI than they would at a live tradeshow. Investments in graphics, videos, pre-event marketing, and sponsorship placements are worth it if attendees find your virtual booth and like what they see. You didn't have to pay for travel, entertainment or hotels, so reinvest those dollars to create an outstanding exhibit experience.



Secret #1: Plan Ahead



1: Research the attendee

Successful exhibitors research to understand the type of individuals who are likely to attend. They shouldn't expect the audience to be exactly the same as in past live shows and a focus on the demographics of the virtual exhibitor helps target this new audience.

2: Assess your competition

Exhibitors walk the tradeshow floor, check out the booths and get a sense of the other companies that are competing for the attendees' attention. This is a little harder in a virtual event, but the savvy exhibitor looks to see who is exhibiting, where they've exhibited in the past to a sense of the competition.

#3: Evaluate the agenda

Content is always king at a virtual event, but it's also an indicator of what the audience is likely going to be interested in. Exhibitors that want to cater to the virtual audience explore the agenda, look at the topics and incorporate those elements into their exhibit content design.

#4: Give yourself enough time

Creating the right exhibit doesn't happen overnight in a virtual event. Starting early gives exhibitors the advantage of upgrading their graphics, producing new materials and videos for the virtual exhibit, and getting the content message in line. Generating a marketing strategy ahead of the event will ensure that both the event as well as your exhibit gets noticed.

#5: Set meetings in advance

Virtual events often keep attendees quite busy during event days, but that doesn't mean they are too busy to meet with you. Successful exhibitors have a strategy to leverage the attendee list provided by the event, reach out ahead and get scheduled meetings on the books before the event opens.



Secret #2: Reach out in advance



The time to engage attendees in a virtual event is not when it opens; it's well in advance. Successful exhibitors have a strategy to let the market know that they are exhibiting at the event, tease potential attendees about what they will experience if they come to the booth and give people reasons to meet while the show is live. Successful exhibitors use every promotional tool at their disposal including social media, email marketing and press announcements.

Engage the Audience Before the Event Starts

Leverage social media

Ask your marketing team to augment the social media strategy by promoting your participation in the event on all platforms that the event audience frequents (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram). Make sure to use the right hashtags that identify the event as well as your company.

Discover the power of video

Give people a reason to notice you in “micro-moments” by creating a series of short, engaging videos that promote your participation in the event. Then, find ways to socialize those videos everywhere to keep people interested in your story and exhibit.

Run email campaigns

Use the list of leads from past events or your prospect list for pre-event email campaigns. Don't have a list? Engage a freelancer from Upwork or Fiverr to “data scrape” and create one for you. Email outperforms most other marketing strategies and is the promotional workhorse for successful exhibitors.

Tease show specials

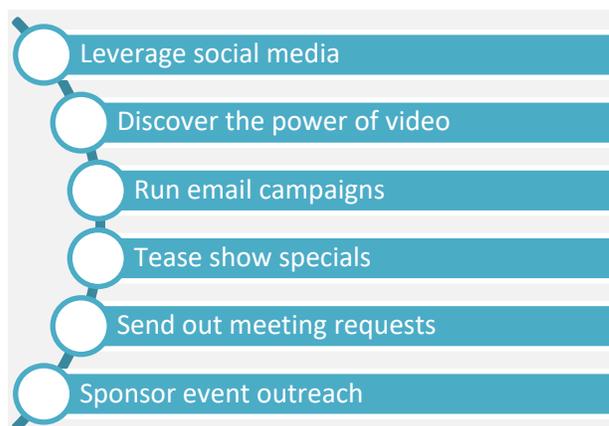
Exhibitors that offer show specials, discounts, promotions, samples or giveaways get attendees to pay attention. Make sure to hype your specials in pre-event promotion.

Send out meeting requests

Explore if the event has a meeting request or matchmaking service that allows you to target the audience you want to meet with during the event. If you don't have access to event matchmaking, then consider a landing page with an embedded online calendar to attract attendees and encourage them to schedule a meeting once the show stages.

Sponsor event outreach

While exhibitors are attempting to reach their audience, the event's outreach is in high gear. Explore sponsorship opportunities to appear in newsletters, social media promotions or other event-sponsored outreach to take advantage of the event's promotional engine.



Secret #3: Understand the Technology



Exhibitors participating in multiple events use different technology platforms that host their virtual booths, all of which are different. Successful exhibitors get to know the technology for each individual event, gain a full understanding of the features and learn how to leverage them to enhance the attendee experience. Exhibitors must compensate for virtual booths that offer fully-featured immersive experiences to those that are more basic.

Learn the Features of the Virtual Booth

Use technology to attract attendees

The liberal adding of keywords and data tags helps attendees in their search for the booth. In addition, keywords may be important in tagging content to display in directories outside the booth. Exhibitors add in-booth demos or sessions to get attendees to meet their product team or executives.

Getting “Badge Scans”

Some exhibitors don't have the sponsorship level to allow them to get contact information unless attendees take an affirmative action inside the booth. Exhibitors that understand all the ways technology captures and delivers contact information will get the maximum number of sales leads.

Creating Calls to Action

Attendees expect to walk away with discounts, new product info, pricing, or even samples. And don't forget about the power of a raffle or giveaway. Add those elements to the booth and forms to capture attendee information in return for getting something they value.

Communicating with Attendees

Savvy exhibitors learn all the ways the platform lets them chat, message and reach out to attendees. They login early, explore communication options before the event and add enough staff to respond to in-booth chats and meeting requests.

Displaying content

Exhibitors that win know how to tell their story through banners, videos and content. They have an exhibit strategy that is graphically engaging, economizes on words, and communicates who they are, what they sell and the audience that wants their products.

Use analytics wisely

Event platforms should give exhibitors an on-going account of what is going on in the booth. Smart exhibitors look at the data in their activity reports often, adjust their strategy dynamically and focus on what's popular and dropping what nobody is paying attention to.

The Portable Virtual Booth



Exhibitors should plan on having most of their shows, conferences and events either go virtual or hybrid in 2021. Why not build a booth that meets all your needs and take it with you from show to show? Use a linking or single sign on strategy to move attendees into your custom environment to produce the experience that will excite and engage them. (Check out [Cloud Exhibit](#) on page 15)

Secret #4: Have a Content Strategy



Exhibitors that excel know how to position themselves as experts in their industry, trend-setters and educators. They go beyond just having sessions focused on selling their product features, and instead showcase their expertise on their marketplace, what is trending, and the changing face of the customer. A content strategy defines the exhibitor inside the booth as well as on the show's event stage.

Successful Exhibitors Know that Content is King!

Design meaningful sessions

Put together educational sessions that offer true value to the audience instead of trying to hide a sales pitch under the guise of a session. Exhibitors that deliver 2-3 meaningful takeaways position the company as experts in the industry. Showcase staff and invite customers to participate in sessions.

Take sessions on the road

Exhibitors that you remember find a way to get themselves on the event agenda as part of a panel, leading a roundtable or conducting an industry session. If leading sessions is not an option, then sponsor sessions on the event agenda to align with the speaker or topic.

Enlist outside expertise

Exhibitors that engage audiences know the value of partnering with others to deliver messages. Add customers who can elaborate on the results of using your products and services. Engage industry experts as panelists or speakers in one of your sessions. Marquis speakers and presenters attract attendees to you and hold their attention.



Give your best elevator speech

Your booth is like a billboard sign on a highway. When an attendee "drives by", you must get the basics in front of them in seconds. Exhibitors that succeed know how to condense their message to relay their product offerings, their unique value proposition, and the type of customers that are the best fit. Overwhelming the audience with content is counterproductive if the basics aren't there.

Highlight what's new

Attendees want to walk away with new ideas, so exhibit strategies should focus on new products, new designs, or new trends.

Secret #5: Build a Better Booth



Move around the virtual exhibit hall and visit various booths and it's clear to see which exhibitors just "phoned it in" and those that worked hard to build a better booth. Booths that attract attendees and hold their attention have compelling graphics, offer video content, upload the right marketing and product materials and have a strategy to give attendees what they need and want.

Successful Exhibitors Create Memorable Virtual Booths

Update your graphics

If it's been a while since you've updated your graphics, now is the time to do it. Memorable exhibitors know that graphics must translate into banners, decorate the booth home page, and be integral in product PDFs. Go light on the words and heavy on the images and art.

Add professional video content

Platforms that allow embedded or uploaded video give exhibitors new ways to capture attendee interest. Exhibitors that become memorable create "sizzle reels" that are short, professionally done and get the story out in only seconds or minutes.

Be easy to navigate

Sometimes "more" is not really more if it creates confusion for the attendee. Successful booths are easy to navigate and are not overcrowded with content. Add links and hot spots to improve navigation

Have clear calls to action

At live shows, exhibitors get badge scans, but often don't know exactly what that attendee was interested in. In the virtual world, exhibitors find out exactly what the attendee wants by having a clear calls to action: unlock the show special, ask for a meeting, request a sample or request pricing.



Place assets strategically

Effective booths put their most important messages or calls to action where they are prominent and seen first. Showcase the most important messages in banners, on the home page or by featuring content.

Make it fun to enter and stay

You want the attendee to stay and look around. Exhibitors that amp up the fun factor keep attendees around longer. Booths can hold scavenger hunts, provide meeting lounges, chat rooms or roundtable discussions, and deliver interesting in-booth sessions.

Secret #6: Think Outside the Booth



The booth is only one segment of the event platform and successful exhibitors know how to place themselves outside the booth to elevate their profile. Sponsorships offer exhibitors advertising placements, sponsorships of sessions, the opportunity to host the social sessions and coffee breaks, have premium placements in site directories and be showcased in exhibit hall pavilions.

Use Sponsorship Opportunities to Raise Your Profile

Secure advertising placements

Exhibitors that research how attendees navigate the platform will best understand where attendees land when they login and the places in the platform that are most heavily viewed. Advertising on the home page, in popular lobbies, on dashboards and in directories get the most views and clicks. Exhibitor ads should create a direct pathway back to the booth.

Sponsor event sessions for agenda appearances

Exhibitors that sponsor event sessions get their logo on the agenda page and on the session landing page with links to the exhibitor booth. When the session launches, the exhibitor may have the opportunity to introduce the speaker or give a quick overview of the company and have the audience land back in the booth when the session is over.

Host the coffee break or cocktail party

Savvy exhibitors that offer to direct and manage social sessions like coffee breaks or cocktail parties to elevate their profile. Social sessions give the exhibitor an informal way to connect with attendees, show the lighter side of the company's personality and invite attendees to get to know you better. Social sessions should have a host, panelists, a moderator and a theme to make them interesting.



Find ways to appear in site directories

Before the event launches, exhibitors need to find out what directories will be present during the show and how to appear in them. Directories go beyond lists of exhibitors in the exhibit hall and may include new products, show specials, in-booth sessions or giveaways.

Get into the Pavilions

Many shows organize their exhibit halls into pavilions where like-minded companies and attendees can socialize, participate in sessions that are delivered on the pavilion stage and have new ways to highlight themselves. Being part of a pavilion increases an exhibitor's exposure.

Secret #7: Create Calls to Action



If the only thing an attendee can do inside a booth is look around, then the exhibitor has missed opportunities to get the attendee involved with the booth staff, participating in educational opportunities, or having a path to get important items delivered to them. Calls to action enhance attendee engagement, keep them in the booth longer and accomplish what the exhibitor values most...valuable sales leads.

Give Attendees Something to do Inside the Booth

Unlock a show special, discount or pricing

Exhibitor should promote special pricing, discounts and create offers that attendees only get because they entered the booth AND gave their contact information to unlock the show special or pricing. Get creative with specials to include discounts, free samples, free shipping or free trials.

Jump into a meeting lounge

All exhibitors have used video conferencing and there is no reason not to fire up a Zoom room during the event. Keep a Zoom meeting open and invite attendees to visit with you inside your virtual meeting lounge. Make sure to publish the hours, who they will meet, and what they will learn when they click the link to join.

Setup a meeting with booth staff

You have attendees all in one place and they have breaks between sessions creating the perfect time to make your team available for meetings. Use the virtual booth technology to schedule meetings and if that functionality doesn't exist, link the attendee to your online calendar to pick a short meeting time to talk to you one of your representatives.

Provide ways to ask questions or get help

Make it easy for attendees to ask questions once they are in the booth by filling out a form or having chat available. Consider adding an FAQ section to make it easy to get answers to the most commonly-asked questions.



Attend a demo

In-booth sessions are a must-have to engage attendees. Offer demos on new products or new features in the existing product line and remember to keep them short and focused. Register attendees for a raffle or giveaway if they attend.

Register to win a prize or giveaway

A good percentage of attendees in a live event are attracted to exhibitors because they are raffling an iPhone, Laptop or gift certificate. Make sure to think about a prize that motivates the attendee to give up their information to enter the drawing. Make it fun by embedding a trivia game as the barrier to entry.

Secret #8: Get Creative



Let's face it, virtual conferences and tradeshows struggle to keep things interesting. When the event fails to delight the audience, that gives the exhibitor an opening to step in and make the attendee experience memorable inside the booth. The more creative the booth appears, the more the activities inside the booth are interesting, or the more the content is engaging, the more the exhibitor will be remembered.

Get Creative to Keep Things Interesting

Create a welcome video

People expect a company or product video, but they may not expect a welcome to the booth video from your team. Think about some out of the box ideas to create a fun and creative video that welcomes attendees into your booth.

Go 3D

If the event platform allows you to add embed code, think about creating a 3D tour of your physical booth, product line or company. Inexpensive 3D programs like Kuula let you select a panoramic image and drop graphics on top to make things interesting.

Offer speed coaching

Add a speed coaching option for attendees to schedule short 15-minute sessions to get expert advice on marketing, sales strategies and more. Embed or link to online calendars and profile the individuals willing to be coaches. This can include booth staff, your marketing team, external resources or even customers.

Offer branded giveaways

Just because events are virtual doesn't mean you can create a giveaway with your logo and branding. Consider a 3-rd party service to pack and ship those items after collecting the attendee contact name and address.



Host a VIP cocktail or dinner event

In a live event, you would have had a VIP list of customers and prospects that you would have hosted at a party or dinner. It takes creativity, but you can do the same at virtual event. Get a list of your customers or prospects that are attending and send out an invitation for a virtual social event.

Create a virtual scavenger hunt

If you want attendees to really engage with all of the assets in your booth, hide clues inside of content, under banners and throughout the booth. Attendees collect the clues, solve the riddle and get entered to win a raffle prize.

Secret #9: Analyze and Adjust



Smart exhibitors ask for data before, during and after the event and use that intelligence to adjust strategy. Attendees often register for virtual events at the last minute, and sometimes don't ever login. Exhibitors should understand how many people are actually active in the platform to adjust their expectations. If available, exhibitors should closely monitor booth traffic, content views and engagement to adjust their strategy mid-event if needed.

Use the Data to Adjust Your Strategy

Registrants don't always equal attendees

People that register may lose interest or lose their password and fail to login. Exhibitors should press the event host for the number of logins vs. registrants and collaborate to help increase those numbers if needed.

Check on views and clicks of content & assets

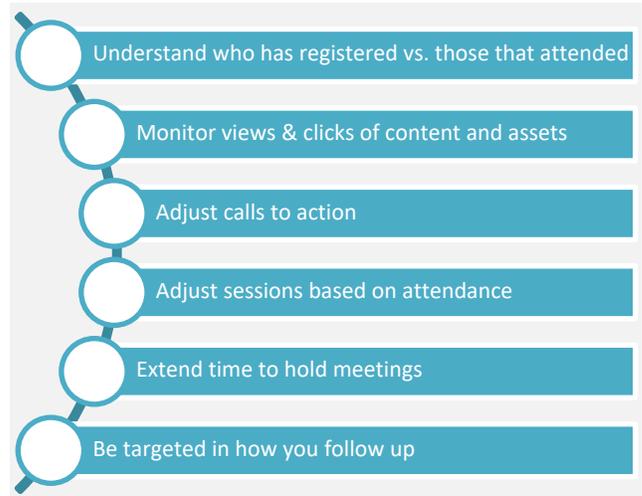
Virtual event platforms and booths should be data engines to report on every interaction including visits, content views, downloads, banner clicks and forms filled out. Knowing this data allows exhibitors to adjust their content strategy and increase ways for attendees to find their booth.

Adjust calls to action

If the data tells you that attendees are only looking and not engaging, then change your calls to action strategy. Add specials, raffles, or other ways for attendees to express interest in you if they are not engaging the way you want them to.

Adjust sessions based on attendance

You've opened your demo room and scheduled in-booth sessions, but attendance is light or non-existent. If the data is telling you that your sessions aren't drawing the right crowd, then cancel the upcoming sessions, change them up and see if you can enlist the event to help you promote them.



Extend time to hold meetings

Part of your strategy should be to set up meetings as a result of the show. If those meetings aren't materializing, then look at the event schedule and if there is not enough time for meetings, go back to attendees to ask them to consider meeting outside of exhibit hours to extend your ability to have a one-on-one connection.

Be targeted in how you follow-up

The data should reveal which attendees just came to the booth and which ones truly want to interact with you. Use this data to be targeted in your follow up.

Secret #10: Have a Strong Follow-up Strategy



You've put most of your effort into the pre-event marketing, building out your content strategy and making your virtual booth memorable. Now it's time to think about the follow up. Virtual events almost always have extended timeframes for attendees to watch live sessions on-demand and come back to the exhibit hall to explore the virtual booths. Extend your marketing plan to include on-going follow up with attendees.

Create the Plan, Target the Audience & Follow up Quickly

Follow up quickly

Exhibitors often collect attendee contact information all the way through the event as individuals respond to calls to action. Use that data to segment what they are most interested in and have your plan ready to follow up within 24 hours after the live portion of the event ends.

Carefully plan the post-marketing campaign

Think carefully about your message to attendees and how you will deliver it. Campaigns that work the best use a multi-media approach, retarget attendees that didn't engage with you at the event and give attendees that did more of what they asked for.

Invite people back to the booth

Most virtual events don't close their platform right away so that means your virtual booth will remain online. After the sessions are over, invite attendees you couldn't connect with back to the booth for a meeting or to attend a virtual demo or session.

Get active on social media

Use show hashtags on social media to provide feedback on the event and insights from sessions. Share your takeaways and commentary on the industry and where you think it's going so you continue to attract attention.



Survey the attendees

Avoid boring and generic follow ups and make it interesting and conversational. Survey them to get their impressions on the show, the sessions and your booth. Extend your show specials to give attendees more time to respond to your offers.

Extend show specials

Those that attend a tradeshow are likely there to find products and services that they would like to purchase for their own business or resell to their customers. Assume that show specials are part of the attraction and extend the time you make them available to capture attendees who didn't engage during the event.

Summary of the Top 10 Insider Secrets

Do the research



Research attendees as well as fellow exhibitors in advance to target your approach and assess the competition.

Reach Out in Advance



Successful exhibitors use every promotional tool at their disposal including social media, email marketing and press announcements.

Understand the Technology



Get to know the technology features and learn how to leverage them to enhance the attendee experience.

Have a Content Strategy



Exhibitors that excel know how to position themselves as experts in their industry, trend-setters and educators.

Build a Better Booth



Add compelling graphics, offer video content, upload the right marketing and product materials and engage attendees.

Think Outside the Booth



The booth is only one segment of the event platform so promote yourself outside the booth to elevate your profile.

Create Calls to Action



Calls to action enhance attendee engagement, keep them in the booth longer and accomplish what the exhibitor values most...valuable sales leads.

Get Creative



The more creative the booth, the activities inside the booth and the content, the more the exhibitor will be remembered

Analyze and Adjust



If available, exhibitors should closely monitor booth traffic, content views and engagement to adjust their strategy mid-event if needed.

Strong Follow Up



Don't put all the effort in the pre-event marketing, building content strategy and making your virtual booth memorable. Think about the follow up.

Honorable Mention: Best Exhibitor Secrets

Be flexible

Many exhibitors are used to the exhibit format of live events, but it's important to remember that it's nearly impossible to completely replicate the live event experience on a virtual platform. Adjust your expectations and adapt to exhibiting on a virtual platform. There is so much value to exhibiting virtually, so be flexible, be patient, and have fun!

Incorporate face to face time

You don't have the opportunity to shake someone's hand inside the booth but you still can incorporate live face-to-face connections at a virtual event. You'll have options to connect with attendees in ways you never had before, so don't forget to incorporate options for your attendees to chat, meet, and network with you in virtual meeting lounges.

Stand out from the crowd

Don't be afraid to think outside of the box and incorporate unique activities or sessions in your booth. Check out what other exhibitors are doing, and do something completely unique and memorable. Raffle off something big and exciting. Bring in high profile guest speakers to your in-booth sessions. Think creatively and make a statement.

Add personalization

Attendees love a personal touch when you're engaging with them, and don't like to be treated like just another sales lead. Do your research before reaching out to attendees, and personalize your meeting request messages. Impress your attendees by personalizing your follow-up.

Put yourself in the attendee's shoes

Ask yourself questions like "If I were an attendee, what would I find valuable?", "What type of content would interest me the most?", "What would bring me into an exhibitor's booth?", and "What would keep me coming back to an exhibitor's booth?". Get real time feedback from attendees while you're meeting with them, take notes, and adjust.

Have multiple ways for attendees to reach out

Exhibitors that fail, don't have enough opportunities or ways for attendees to connect with them. Your audience will include people with varying degrees of tech savvy, and varying communication preferences. Include a variety of ways for attendees to reach out, including a live chat, face to face virtual meetings, contact forms, and simply listing contact information.

Ask an expert

Your event platform or show host generally has event specialists, so don't be afraid to pick their brains and ask for ideas. If you get stuck, or are unsure of where to go next, use the event staff. They have extensive experience assisting exhibitors, and will be more than happy to share their best practices for what works and what doesn't work.

Choose the right exhibitor package

You're likely to have many options to choose from when selecting an exhibitor package. Determine what your goals are and take a look at each individual package. You want to make sure you get everything you need for a successful show, but don't want to spend money on features you won't use.

Cloud Conventions is the Platform for Virtual Events, Conferences, Kick-Off Events & Trade Shows

Cloud Conventions is an automated platform that manages everything needed to execute a flawless virtual event, trade show or conference. Unlike other platforms that are designed primarily for simple webinars or streamed single events, Cloud Conventions creates a rich, interactive environment for attendees, a multi-faceted way to promote vendors and sponsors, and complete management for sessions, speakers and keynotes. Cloud Conventions manages both a single or multi-day event.

The Cloud Exhibit™, Portal Virtual Booth

Cloud Exhibit is the online platform for companies that want a portable exhibit environment to enhance the attendee experience and generate leads at any virtual tradeshow, event or conference. Your company now owns the exhibit environment that can be used over multiple events linking or connecting attendees to your custom experience regardless of the event platform.



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